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ABSTRACT

A packet of materials provides the leader of an inservice program on the teaching of reading another language with information on relevant theory on the reading process, a plan for conveying that information in a workshop, and a set of handouts for participants. The course structure includes background information and detailed notes for leading discussions on the nature of reading and for conducting and following up a simulated reading activity. A one-page annotated bibliography and sample handouts are included. (MSE)

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PRELIMINARY NOTE

It is important that workshop presenters study these materials carefully before using them. They are designed to provide the resources necessary for development of the topic, but the individual presenter will have to develop a plan in terms of time, allocations and background of the audience. The packet does contain suggestions for optional activities, extra handouts, time guidelines, sequence, and use of materials.

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FOR THE WORKSHOP LEADER

Introductory Packet: What Do We Do When We Read?

Forward

This packet of materials provides the leader of an inservice program on the Teaching of Reading Another Language with relevant theory on the reading process, a plan for conveying that information in a workshop, and a set of handouts for participants. It is suggested that the following sequence be observed in using this packet:

[SUGGESTED TIME:
I. 15 minutes
II. 20-30 minutes
III. 5-10 minutes]

I. Present the definitions and demonstration of the reading process in language 1 and language 2.

II. Conduct the simulated second language reading activity.

III. Use the results of the demonstration to summarize the theory/practice connection before going on to the application section.

[Bracketed information in the left margin identifies materials and major procedures.]

I. Reading: The Process Defined

[TRANSPARENCY OR OTHER VISUAL]

A) Place the following word on a transparency, a chalkboard, or upon an easel.

CORUSCATED

Ask for a show of hands from those who know the meaning of the word (but ask them not to reveal the meaning). Ask others to share anything they guess at about its meaning. (Answers tend to be: "It's a verb, past time" plus a range of guesses (e.g., rusted).)

B) Now reveal the following sentence on the transparency or write it on the chalkboard or paper:

"THE CLOUDS PARTED MOMENTARILY, AND THE SNOW ON THE MOUNTAIN-TOP CORUSCATED IN THE RAYS OF THE RISING SUN."

[INTERACTION]

Ask that those who did not know the word in isolation to guess at the meaning now from the context of the sentence.

List the responses which will probably include both correct and incorrect meanings.

Ex.: glistened, gleamed, melted . . .

Ask participants to tell how they arrived at that meaning. Answers should indicate that they guessed from context but by using several different cues. Point out that meanings such as "melted", which are often guesses from a quick reading, are ruled out by drawing upon details in a more careful reading. For example, "rising rays" and "clouds parting momentarily" do not provide strong or direct enough heat to melt snows.

[LECTURE]

Summarize by pointing out that both language and real world knowledge had to come together for them to assign meaning correctly: language form, part of speech, and tense help, but the meaning of the other words and real world knowledge of nature are necessary contributions to the eventual determination of what rays of light do against snow.

C) Talk about definitions of the reading process in first and second foreign language by expanding on the definitions in Handout #1-A.

[HANDOUT #1-A]

READING IS:

(Background information to lead discussion. There is an annotated bibliography in the Appendix to this packet for those interested in reading more on this topic.)

[DISCUSSION]

Ask teachers to tell you what they think these short phrases really say about reading. Expand on their responses to include information here.

-assigning meaning to letters, words, phrases, paragraphs.

(The more fluent the reader, the larger the units that can be processed at a given time. Frank Smith describes "feature analysis" as the procedure whereby the reader naturally analyzes smaller features when obstacles to meaning occur, and larger ones when meaning is assigned easily. In other words, when we are reading fluently and suddenly hesitate because something is unclear or uncertain, we stop to look more closely at a word or at a letter.)

-not passive.

It is an active process of making sense of print. (The mental processes involved in both the decoding and fluent reading stages require high level and complex cognitive strategies and knowledge.)

-the reduction of uncertainty.

(Most reading tasks involve a mixture of the known and the unknown; this is especially the case when reading another language. The reader's job is to reduce the amount of "unknown" through various problem-solving strategies.)

-based on both visual and non-visual information.

(Visual refers to that which passes through the eyes

and non-visual to that which is behind the eyes, in the head. The more non-visual information the reader possesses the less visual is needed. Think about your ability to read a human interest story versus an article on laser physics - unless that is your field!)

-less a matter of extracting sound from print than of assigning meaning to print.

(While reading aloud is a valuable first language activity, its usefulness in beginning levels of foreign language reading is limited. This is due to the fact that oral development is rarely much ahead of visual, so that the ability to pronounce a word has little effect on establishing meaning. When a word is not part of an active oral vocabulary, sounding it out helps little if at all.)

-a psycholinguistic guessing game.

(The best readers are the best guessers; the sensible guesser, not the wild guesser, wins. Good guessing entails using all the linguistic information available and the most effective psychological strategies. Affective factors play a role as well, for the learner must develop a willingness to guess and to risk being wrong.)

-a highly individual activity.

(Each reader approaches a selection with great diversity as to the non-visual information in his/her possession and as to the process strategies utilized.)

-a problem-solving behavior.

(On any hierarchy of cognitive skills, all the higher

level thinking tasks, involve problem-solving, that is creative applications of learned rules to gain new information or concepts.)

II. A Simulated Reading Activity

A) State that the objective of this exercise is to sensitize teachers to the reading process as their students experience it. The passages they will read are excerpts from A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess.* Depending upon the time available for the workshop, you may have participants read all four passages or a combination. In this case, it is recommended that 1 and 2, or 1, 2, and 4 be used.

[HANDOUT #1-B] (See Handout #1-B for the passages.)

The passages emphasize different aspects of reading:

Passage 1 demonstrates solving for the meaning of vocabulary or content words.

Passage 2 demonstrates how syntax advances meaning.

Passage 3 demonstrates processing both vocabulary and syntax in a more complete context.

Passage 4 demonstrates how lack of anything but function words and syntax prevents real understanding.

[INTERACTION] B) Lead teachers through the simulation by having them read one passage at a time. Ask them to skim through Passage #1 and to underline or check the words that are "unfamiliar" to them on a first reading. Then ask:

1) What is the general topic in this paragraph?
2) Where does it take place?

*Note: If your audience has been familiarized with this passage, you may prefer to use selections from Dune (Frank Herbert) or Watership Down (Richard Adams).

Accept answers to #1 that have to do with eating, having a meal, and the like. Question 2 may be a restaurant, cafeteria, hospital, prison.

Now ask participants to read the passage again, more closely, by trying to give a more precise meaning to the words they did not understand.

After a few minutes, have participants share the meanings their guesses produced and explain their "solving" process. When an answer is given, you might ask if others had the same answer but arrived at it via a different route.

Here are some sample answers and strategies; the most correct answer is underlined but this degree of accuracy is usually not necessary.

Word or Phrase	Meaning	Strategy
pischa	-meal, food, dish	-influence of "appetizing" -something on a tray -things that follow are foods
lomticks	-slices, pieces chunks	-how roast beef served
kartoffel	-potatoes	-they are most commonly mashed -reader knows German
vedge	-vegetables	-"vedge" a shortened term -goes with roast beef and potatoes
chasha of chai	-cup of tea cup of coffee	-hot drink with meal -knows Russian or other Slavic language -"tea" because reader knows action takes place in London
cancer	-cigarette	-word association, cause/effect -what's smoked

III. Summarize for participants what happened here by making the following points:

1) Readers used highly individual strategies to assign meaning.

2) Those who know Russian or other Eastern European languages read more fluently and had to do minimal decoding because most of these words were cognates for them.

3) Cultural knowledge helps. Westerners link roast beef, potatoes, vegetables in a way readers from other world regions might not. Had a pre-reading activity established England as the location of the story, "wrong" answers about coffee would have been converted to "tea".

4) Many sources of information came together for a successful reading; linguistic cues, information about the world; and knowledge of related languages.

5) Reading is a "top down" process not a "bottom up" one. Reading for global understanding and working down to detail is more productive than going from word to phrase to sentence to paragraph.

C) Read Passage #2:

-What did the "hero" do?

-Why?

Again ask for the meaning of the following words or phrases:

Word or Phrase	Meaning	Strategy
gazetta	-newspaper	-from gazette
kupetted	-bought, picked up, read	-past, something you do to a newspaper
jeezny	-life, routine	-association with "normal"
viddying	-seeing	-video (Latin, Romance languages), visual
ittying	-going	-prediction, fits into flow of sentence

(Note that this passage exemplified the ways in which syntax advanced meaning and of the influence of idiom. In several instances here, the choice of words was anticipated in the context of the sentence.)

D) Read Passage #3 and answer the following questions:

-How many people are involved in the scene? (4)

-What is the general emotional tone conveyed by the paragraph? (fear, nervousness)

Skim the paragraph and list the words or phrases that contribute to the emotions identified. (trembled, shook, surprised and almost frightened)

Solve for meanings for these nouns and explain your thought process.

10-8	-	*apartment number, clue from 10th floor*
rooker	-	*hand, associated with pocket and key*
carman	-	*pocket, where key is*
klootch	-	*key, defined "for opening"*
glazzies	-	*from "glazzed" eyes, pairs, subject of look*
pee em	-	*had a key, was home, P. and M., Pa and Ma*
veck	-	*3rd person, another "fellow"*

Notice the strong relationships among these words so that knowing one leads to the others. The paragraph also uses definition and reiteration to link words and meanings.

Toward the end of the paragraph, the reader now sees recently acquired words reused thus confirming earlier guesses. These include:

"viddied in my jeezy..."

"milky chai"

Finally, what does the stranger look like? Bolshy, thick (from Russian, "great, big" or compatible with thick) and dressed in shirt and braces (British term for suspenders).

[DRILL]

E) Tell participants you wish to do something different with the last sentence. Have someone read the sentence aloud, then ask participants to answer these questions. (Do this as a fairly rapid question/answer drill.)

1) What is the sentence about? What is the subject? MALCHICKS
2) What are the malchicks like? GLOOPY
3) What did the malchicks do? They SCATTED.
4) How did they scat? RAZDRAZILY
5) Where did they scat? To the MESTO.
6) What's a mesto? A place where gloopy malchicks scat!

*7) What does the sentence mean???

Use this example to demonstrate what reading is not and that this type of activity has little or nothing to do with understanding.

Point 1: When meaning is lacking, reading aloud is only a pronouncing exercise, and in many instances even the symbol-to-sound correspondence is dependent upon knowing meaning first.

How do you pronounce "present" or "lead" in English without clues to meaning or structure? Or "fils" or "fier" in French?

Thus, reading aloud by students is a poor introductory activity; its proper place is after comprehension has taken place for purposes of pronunciation.

Point 2: Manipulation of language and comprehension can be independently processed by students. Many of the so-called comprehension exercises in texts resemble the one above. We have seen that perfectly correct, fluent responses can be given even when understanding is totally absent.

F) Summary

Ask participants to review the definitions under "Reading is ..." in light of their experience with these passages. They should be able to see:

1) that their own knowledge and experience determined ease of reading, quantity of "unknown" items, strategies used.
[Recall that in Clockwork Orange those with knowledge of slavic languages read using a high number of cognates, and those who saw the film brought information in terms of content. Solving for words such as pischa drew very different strategies from individuals: linking with "appetizing," reading forward with something "laid out on a tray," or connecting with the food items which followed.]

2) that their reading was both active and individualistic;
[Active processing was required to guess from context, to draw upon relationships (cancer for cigarette; glazzies for eyes),

and there are many instances where individuals came to the same conclusion via very different paths.]

3) that getting the gist via an introductory activity and reading from "top down" facilitated meaning more than working in a linear fashion or "bottom up" would have. [Informing readers that the action took place in Britain leads to chai receiving more tea than coffee guesses from those not able to relate to a cognate, and braces is not a "nonsense" word for those familiar with British terminology. Having them read for general idea, establishing that the first paragraph is about a meal, helps solve for the smaller items.]

The next part of the workshop will apply these insights and theory to the teaching of second-language reading.

Appendix

Annotated Bibliography

Grellet, Francoise. Developing Reading Skills: A Practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

A practical text with an abundance of examples for exercises. Especially strong in ideas for predicting, skimming activities.

Hosenfeld, Carol. "Cindy: A Learner in Today's Foreign Language Classroom," pp. 53-75 in Warren C. Born, Ed., The Foreign Language Learner in Today's Classroom Environment. Middlebury, VT: Northeast Conference, 1979.

This close-up study of a foreign language reader reveals efficient and inefficient student strategies. Suggestions for remediation of the process. Hosenfeld's work in general offers similar insights into student strategies.

Phillips, June K. "Practical Implications of Recent Research in Reading." Foreign Language Annals 17:4 (September 1984): 285-296.

This article provides the basis for the development of the module and contains further background on the rationale for the 5-stage plan. See also reaction papers in the same issue of Foreign Language Annals by Jilleen V. Aspatore, Helene Z. Loew, Alice C. Omaggio, Renate A. Schulz and Emery W. Tetrault.

Smith, Frank. Understanding Reading: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read, 2nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

A very readable text which provides a thorough review of the first language reading process. A primary source for those interested in the theory of reading.

Swaffar, Janet King. Reading: The Cognitive Process Approach. [Paper presented at the Northeast Regional Conference on Strengthening the Humanities through Foreign Languages and Literature Studies, Philadelphia, PA: 1983.]

Ideas for teaching students to use anticipation skills by consistently following a model. Any of Swaffer's work contains theory plus useful practices.

READING IS --

-assigning meaning to letters, words, phrases and paragraphs.

-not a passive skill.

-the reduction of uncertainty.

-both visual and non-visual information.

-less a matter of extracting sound from print than of assigning meaning to print.

-a psycholinguistic guessing game.

-a highly individual activity.

-a problem-solving behavior.

Passages from A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess

1) . . . It was really a very nice appetizing bit of pischa they'd laid out on the tray -- two or three lomticks of like hot roast beef with mashed kartoffel and vedge, then there was also ice-cream and a nice hot chasha of chai. And there was even a cancer to smoke and a matchbox with one match in it.

2) I kupetted a gazetta, my idea being to get ready for plunging back into normal jeezny again by viddying what was ittying on in the world.

3) So I went to the tenth floor, and there I saw 10-8 as it had been before, and my rooker trembled and shook as I took out of my carman the little klootch I had for opening up. But I very firmly fitted the klootch in the lock and turned, then opened up then went in, and there I met three pairs of surprised and almost frightened glazzies looking at me, and it was pee and em having their breakfast, but it was also another veck that I had never viddied in my jeezny before, a bolshy thick veck in his shirt and braces, quite at home, brothers, slurping away at the milky chai and munchmunching at his eggiweg and toast.

4) The gloopy malchicks scatted razdrazily to the mesto.